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developing a modern merchant marine is the one which of late years has come nearest to the maritime policy of the United States.

American shipowners are familiar with the general facts of European experience. They know that "free ships" have never created, unaided, a strong native shipbuilding or a symmetrical merchant marine. In France, in Italy, in Germany, they have finally had to have the help of subsidies and bounties. But there is one nation which "free ships" have conspicuously benefited. Captain Codman's vaunted privilege "to build or buy ships in England" has redounded to the immense advantage of England itself. In 1860 the total tonnage of the United Kingdom was 4,653,687. In 1895 it was 12,117,967. During 1894 the enormous new tonnage of 1,046,508 (gross) was launched from British shipyards. Thirteen per cent. of this was built for foreigners.

Is it surprising that American shipowners are irrevocably opposed to a policy which under present conditions could have only the result—if it had any result at all—of playing into the hands of their ancient enemy?

WINTHROP L. MARVIN.

THE AMENITIES OF PHILOLOGY.

NEVER before was there so much enthusiasm manifested in linguistic studies as during the last quarter of the current century, and there is no indication at the present time of a waning interest. Not only have languages been studied in their relation to one another, but dialects have come in for their share in the pursuit of these studies. Nor has our own country been backward in contributing, through its dialectal and various philological associations, its quota to the science of philology. Authors in different parts of the country have written long and (it must be confessed, sometimes) tedious stories in the individual dialects of their respective localities. There are books in the dialect of the negro, as, for example, Thomas Nelson Page's, those in the dialect of the Tennessee Mountains, as, for example, Miss Murfree's books, those in the dialect of the "Georgia cracker," as the stories of Joel Chandler Harris, and a host of others in other parts of the country. These books are almost like the sands of the seashore for number.

So numerous and varied are the local dialects of this country that a contributor to this REVIEW recently ventured the thesis that from the very nature of the diverse and varied character of our local dialects, there can not be any such thing as a great national novel in the United States. While this is, it must be admitted, a somewhat extreme view, to which many do not feel prepared to subscribe, the fact remains that there are marked dialectal peculiarities in the spoken language of certain localities. These dialectal peculiarities, however, are fast disappearing before the onward march of the unifying influence of education, the printing press, and the railroad. When the leavening power of education has permeated the entire population of the country, there will result uniformity of speech, and dialectal variations from the common form will linger but as a tradition.

The dialect authors, in the meantime, are doing the reading public a service in furnishing it with entertaining stories of an elevating character. Some of them at least, as, for example, Page, Harris, and others, are doing literature and science an ulterior service, consciously or unconsciously, in preserving in their books types of a people and their speech which a wave of oblivion is rapidly sweeping away.

If one will examine the speech of the negro and of the native-born illiterate white, it matters not whether the latter be from New England or from the South, one will find that, barring certain provincialisms peculiar to their respective homes, their language has much in common, and to the student of historic English, it exhibits indisputable evidence of its affinity with the English of the seventeenth century. This is obvious from such words as "handkercher," "ar" (air), "pint" (point), "pison" (poison), "gwine" (going), "arrant" (errand), "cratur" (creature), "arth" (earth), all of which are common alike to the "Yankee dialect" and to the negro dialect. The student who is familiar with the development of the English tongue will at once recognize these as standard according to the *jus et norma loquendi* of the seventeenth century. But in the development of the language, these pronunciations subsequently fell into disuse and were discarded by standard English. They still survived, however, in the lower stratum of society among the poor and illiterate who, denied the privileges and advantages of an education, and therefore ignorant of the most elementary grammatical principles, inherited this speech from their ancestors and handed it down, with but little change, from generation to generation, to their children.

The language of the seventeenth century was brought to America by the early settlers and was taught the slaves, and the tongue which the illiterate negroes then learned to speak they have preserved, without any material change, down to the present generation. Since this is the case, we cannot then be surprised to find upon examination that many of their dialectal pronunciations and locutions are to be traced back to classic authors of an earlier period, yea, even to Shakspeare himself. In this sense it is doubtless true that many of the fossilized pronunciations of our illiterates are much nearer the language of, and are more intelligible to, Shakspeare and Milton than present standard English.

Every one who has ever heard the old negro preacher giving an "exhortation" at the close of his fervid "sarmon" knows very well that, though the old preacher's heart was all right, and himself on the way to the kingdom, his conscience never troubled him in the least about his loose grammar. Notwithstanding his sanctification and ecstatic anticipation of the joys of the kingdom for which he was bound, he had no conscientious scruples about "axing" his "ole marster" if the latter was at all tardy in offering him any desired help. Perhaps many of those who were so familiar with the lingo of the old preacher never reflected that his language, like his heart, was, after all, not very far wrong, and entirely without precedent when he "axed" for something. He was but obeying the scriptural injunction, which, according to Tyndale's translation, reads: "Axe and it shall be geven you." Nor do they know that he was but following, though unwittingly, the example set by that first English printer, Caxton, who, in the preface to his *Æneid* of Virgil, used the same expression. If, then, the old preacher blundered, as, according to our modern standard, he did, he at all events blundered in good company.

In Chaucer, "the first finder of our faire langage," as his ardent admirer, Occleve, rapturously called him, we find this same word. Here we find, also, forms now fossilized, such as "kiver," "driv," "holp," "writ," "rid," etc. In "Much Ado About Nothing," Dogberry, though he dislocates the dictionary in speaking of that villain who, he prophesies, would be condemned to everlasting redemption, yet uses grammar which, for his day, was above

reproach, when he exclaimed: "O that I had been writ down an ass!"

So we must acknowledge that no violence was done to the language, however our sense of propriety may be shocked, when a century or so ago a Londoner remarked to his friend, who came up to the metropolis to see the play of "Orpheus and Eurydice": "You came up to town, I suppose to see Orpheus and *you rid I see*," alluding to the mud with which he was copiously bespattered. It would be difficult to find a more felicitous example of paronomasia in the literature of that period.

Shakspeare, who could not resist the temptation to play on words, furnishes us additional proof of his versatility and ingenuity in his apt recognition of the obsolescent pronunciation of many words of his time, which he turned to good account. Hence so many of his witticisms. In "Henry IV.," for instance, *Falstaff* says: "If reasons were as plentiful as blackberries, I would give no man a reason upon compulsion," thus playing upon the old pronunciation of raisins with which we are all familiar. Thus he plays upon the antiquated pronunciation of Rome as room, when, in "Julius Cæsar," *Cassius* says of *Cæsar's* vaulting ambition which o'erleaped itself:

"Now is it Rome, indeed, and Roome enough,
When there is in it but one only man."

One of the conundrums of that period, which, by the way, can only have belonged to that period, illustrates the antiquated pronunciation of chair as cheer, still current among the illiterate. "Why is a stout man always happy?" The answer was, "Because he is a cheerful (chair full)."

I venture to give one more illustration, which throws light upon the vulgar pronunciation of neither as "nayther." Some persons' literary conscience will not let them rest till they settle the question whether they shall say "ither" or "ether" for either. The Anglo-maniacs settle this matter very summarily by adopting the former pronunciation. Some prig of Dr. Johnson's day, who evidently had a tender conscience on the subject, came to the old bear one day and asked him, "Dr. Johnson, do you say ether or ither?" "Nayther, sir!" was the characteristically brusque reply of the great Cham, a pronunciation still current among the Irish, and occasionally heard among the negroes. This story may not be true—the words are those of an "Angle," not an "Angel"—but it at all events might have been true, and certainly is interesting as throwing light upon a philological subject which, until the recent researches of Ellis into the pronunciation of early English, was enveloped in almost Cimmerian darkness.

EDWIN W. BOWEN.

OBJECTIONS TO A CHILDREN'S CURFEW.

I READ with great interest Mrs. Townsend's article on the "Curfew for City Children," in the December number of the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*; but may I be permitted to say that it is quite possible to have the welfare of children very much at heart, and yet to oppose strongly this proposed ordinance?

All that Mrs. Townsend says about the prevalence of child crime is perfectly true. During the seven years that I have worked among boys on the lower east side of New York, I have found that the habits of gambling, lying, and stealing were almost universal; but the late hours kept by the